are several complex issues involved in the question of restructuring the UN Security Council as well as the question concerning new permanent members. In view of the complexities and the diverse perceptions on the specifics of such reforms among member States, a decision on this issue has not been reached as yet.

(c) There is a steady accretion of support for India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Several countries-permanent members as well as others-have expressed support for India's candidature either in the UN or in the context of bilateral exchanges. Such support is expressed in different forums and forms and it is, therefore, difficult to give a definitive number on countries which have specifically supported India.

(d) The Government has been pursuing India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council, and takes up India's case in all its high-level bilateral interactions.

Joint Study Group between India and Malaysia

352. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Government of India and Malaysia have set up a Joint Study Group to study the bilateral economic affairs and signed a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) During the visit of H.E. Mr. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia to India from 19-23 December 2004, it was agreed to explore the possibility of concluding a Comprehensive Economic Cooperative Agreement between the two countries. In pursuance of the decision, a joint Study Group has been constituted to discuss the feasibility of the proposed Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement.

(b) The Terms of Reference for the Joint Study Group were finalised during the visit of the Commerce and Industry Minister to Malaysia on 17 January 2005. The first meeting of the Joint Study Group, to be

co-chaired by the Commerce Secretary and the Secretary General of the ministry of International Trade and Industry of the Government of Malaysia, is being held on 2-3 March, 2005 in New Delhi.

Improvement in relations with Pakistan

353. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the status of the ties with Pakistan in varied fields.

(b) whether there has been improvement in the overall relations with Pakistan for the past two years;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (d) Significant developments have taken place in India-Pakistan relations since April 2003. Relation have been restored at the level of High Commissioners, transport and communication links have resumed, one round of Composite Dialogue has been completed; a series of technical level and Composite Dialogue related meetings have been held on schedule. Another round has been initiated during the Foreign Secretary level talks in December 2004. It has been decided to hold the technical level meetings in the current round by July 2005, and the meetings on the other six subjects under the Composite Dialogue, between April and June 2005.

* People to people exchanges are taking place across the spectrum in large numbers. There has been a resumption of visits by pilgrim groups. Our High Commission is issuing close to 7,000 visas per month.

* The visit of the Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan in November and Speaker of the National Assembly in December 2004 marked a new beginning in strengthening contacts between the institutions of democracy in the two countries.